

## **Prairie Dog Behaviors**

### **Learner Outcomes**

The learner will

- Identify the four categories of prairie dog behaviors used in prairie dog research.
- Observe prairie dog behaviors in a natural and a captive environment.
- Collect information about prairie dog behaviors in a natural and a captive environment.
- Write a report comparing and contrasting prairie dog behaviors in both environments to demonstrate an understanding of prairie dog behaviors.
- Organize and compile a notebook containing all classroom and field activities.

### **Background**

Prairie dog behaviors can be examined in terms of the following four main categories: 1) communication, 2) intraspecific contacts, 3) daily routine and feeding, and 4) reaction to associated animals. This activity will allow the learner to see some of the behaviors and gain experience in how to observe and collect information about animals in general.

### **Materials**

- Supplements numbers 3.24 through 3.29
- Overhead projector
- *National Geographic Magazine*, April 1998
- Binoculars
- Food and water

### **Assessments**

- Post-test
- Written report comparing and contrasting prairie dog behaviors at the different sites
- Work sheets
- Notebook containing or including field journal

Activity #1  
**Pre-Test and Overview**  
1 class period

### **Procedure**

The teacher will

- Administer pre-test.
- Instruct students to answer related questions while listening to lecture and viewing transparencies.
- Provide instructions on the use of the Prairie Dog Behaviors Checklist and have students complete the form.

- Assign the reading of “The Vanishing Prairie Dog”, *National Geographic Magazine*, April 1998.
- Make arrangements to participate in field trip to observe prairie dogs in a captive and a natural environment.

Activity #2  
**Behaviors at a Captive Site**  
half day

**Procedure**

The teacher will

- Take students to captive site (Living Desert State Park or other zoo-like setting).
- Allow students to use the Prairie Dog Behaviors Checklist to record data and observations.

Activity #3  
**Behaviors at a Natural Site**  
1 day

**Procedure**

The teacher will

- Take students on a field trip to a natural site, preferably the source site.
- Allow students to use the Prairie Dog Behaviors Checklist to record data and observations.
- Discuss and compare the two situations—captive and wild site behaviors.

Activity #4  
**Report and Notebook**  
homework assignment

**Procedure**

The teacher will

- Instruct students to write a report comparing and contrasting prairie dog behavior they noted during their observations at the two sites (captured, non-captured).
- Assemble and turn in notebook containing all collected data.

Activity #5  
**Post-test**  
20 minutes

**Procedure**

The teacher will

- Administer post-test to assess knowledge gained.